



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Park Service Provides Funding for Rural Fire Assistance

The National Park Service, in conjunction with Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, recently provided funding for rural fire assistance to the Bayfield and La Pointe Volunteer Fire Departments. These grants were awarded to increase firefighter safety and to enhance the fire protection capabilities of rural fire departments.

Department of the Interior agencies were allocated \$10 million to enhance the fire protection capability of rural fire departments (RFD's). Of this amount, the NPS received \$1.17 million for rural fire assistance. Historically, the NPS has had no capability to fund these small rural fire departments.

"To qualify for assistance, a RFD has to meet certain requirements," explained Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Superintendent Bob Krumenaker. "These rural fire districts must have a cooperative agreement with the NPS and they must serve a community with a population of less than ten thousand. The RFD must share a minimum of 10% of the cost (which may include in-kind services) and must serve a community within the wildland/urban interface. These local volunteer fire departments were able to meet both of these requirements," Krumenaker added. Funding can only be used for training, equipment, and fire prevention activities.

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Park officials were given a list of needed equipment and/or training needs from each rural fire department. The rural fire departments then used the allocated funds to purchase the requested equipment or to provide the needed training.

The Bayfield VFD received \$16,374 and was able to purchase personal protective equipment, including flame resistant coveralls, boots, gloves, and helmets for twenty- four firefighters. The Bayfield VFD was also able to purchase four portable two- way radios, twenty- four backpack tanks, and several fire shelters.

The La Pointe VFD received \$4,680 and was able to purchase personal protective equipment, including flame resistant coveralls, gloves, goggles, and helmets to outfit eighteen firefighters. The La Pointe VFD was also able to purchase hand tools, wildland fire hose and appliances.

The Rural Fire Assistance program is primarily designed to increase firefighter safety and enhance the fire protection capabilities of rural fire departments. This is achieved by assisting those departments in meeting or exceeding accepted standards of wildland fire qualifications, training, and performance. Emphasis is placed on departments that protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the protection of federal lands.

Of the 388 units managed by the NPS, at least 245 experience wildland fires either originating within the unit, or igniting outside and threatening the park. Particularly in the smaller units, significant assistance from adjacent small communities' rural or volunteer fire departments is required to respond to wildland fires. In many cases, those fire departments are the only firefighting resources available to assist the parks.

Krumenaker emphasized, "This program offers Apostle Islands National Lakeshore a wonderful opportunity to continue our cooperative working relationship with local departments by providing them with much needed equipment and training. It is a good example of how the National Park Service recognizes the important role that these rural fire districts play in the protection of our public lands."

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